THE STURGIS WAGER

A DETECTIVE STORY.

By EDGAR MORETTE

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOST TRAIL.

So saying, Sturgis settled himself in his chair and began his narrative.

"After leaving you this morning, my first step was to gain admission to the Tombs—"

"To the Tombs?" interrupted Dunlap.

"Yes; the cabman has been remanded to the Tombs to await trial for complicity in the murder of the unknown man whose body was found in his cab."

"Arbogast's?"

"Yes, Arbogast's. But of course the police do not know that."

"Were you allowed to see the cabman?"

"Yes. As reporter of the Tempest, I was able to obtain an interview with him. When first arrested, the man, whose name, by the way, is Reilly, was incapable of making a connected statement; the lawyer assigned to defend him laughed in his face when he heard his story, and advised him to leave the romancing to a trained lawyer as his only chance of escaping the electric chair. Naturally, under the circumstances, the poor fellow hesitated to unbosom himself to a stranger. But I finally managed to gain his confidence by showing him that I believed his story, and that I was trying to find the men whose scapegoat he now is. It seems that yesterday afternoon, at about three o'clock, he was stationed at the cab-stand in front of Madison square, where he was accosted by a man, answering Chatham's description, who engaged him to drive him to the Fulton street ferry. On reaching the ferry, the man ordered Reilly to proceed to a low groggshop on South street. Here he entered, returning in a few minutes to invite the cabman to take a drink with him. The men seated themselves at a table upon which a bottle and two filled glasses were already placed. Chatham handed one of these glasses to Reilly, who drank it and probably many more. At any events, he remembers nothing further until he was rudely shaken by Chatham, who led him out into the street. Here the cold air revived him, and he remembers noticing several things to which he did not pay much attention at the time, but which seem significant now as he recalls them:

"Firstly—It was now quite dark.

"Secondly—The cab, which had been facing south when he entered the barroom, was now facing north.

"Thirdly—Chatham persistently carried his left hand in the bosom of his coat; he was very pale and seemed weak and ill.

"He with difficulty climbed upon the box beside Reilly and ordered him to drive uptown. Presently the cabman became drowsy again. The next thing he remembers is coming to himself after the overturning of the cab by the cable car. That the man was drugged there can be no doubt. It is probable that while he sat apparently drunk in the barroom, Chatham took the cab to the Knickerbocker bank, expecting to smuggle Arbogast into it without Reilly's knowledge — a deep move, since it would effectually cover up the trail, if they wanted to make away with the bookkeeper, as they evidently did. Seymour may have met him at the bank by appointment; but I am more inclined to believe that he was there unknown to Chatham, and possibly for the purpose of spying upon the latter, to see if his instructions were carried out. He lent his accomplice a hand in the nick of time; and then, like a prudent general, he retired to a safe position, thence to direct further operations. What I cannot yet understand is, why Chatham should have taken the enormous risk he did in conveying Arbogast's body from the bank, since Seymour's intention was plainly to make away with the bookkeeper in any event. I can explain this only on the supposition that Seymour thought he could conceal the body in some way and prevent it from falling into the hands of the police. On the part of any ordinary criminal this would have been rank folly; but the resources of such a man as Seymour are such that I do not feel disposed to criticise his generalship in this particular without first understanding his ultimate object. From what I have seen of his work thus far, I have derived a profound admiration for the man's genius and cunning deviltry. Fortunately fate was against him this time. Its instrument was the cable car which overturned the cab, thus delivering Arbogast's body into the hands of the police and furnishing the key without which, it is quite likely, Seymour might have remained forever undiscovered."

"You think, then, you will succeed in unearthing this villain?" asked Dunlap, eagerly.

"While there's life, there's hope," said Sturgis, with grim determination; "but I must confess that the outlook at present is not exactly brilliant. However, let me finish my report. During the excitement that followed the overturning of the cab, Chatham managed to escape, as you know, and he has thus far succeeded in avoiding arrest, although the police have kept a sharp lookout for him. Every steamship that sails, every train that leaves New York, is watched, but thus far without result. For my part, I am convinced that Chatham has not yet attempted to leave the city."

"Isn't it probable, on the contrary, that he fled from New York immediately after running away from the overturned cab?" asked Dunlap.

"I do not think so," replied Sturgis; "with his wounded hand he is a marked man; he would be easily recognized in a strange city. His safest hiding-place is here in New York, where he doubtless has friends ready to conceal him. Be that as it may, he remains for the present under cover and the scent is lost. The police are groping in the dark just now, and—and so am I."

The banker looked sorely disappointed.

"And so that is all you have been able to discover? Not a trace of the money? It does not seem possible that a quarter of a million dollars can disappear so completely without leaving the slightest trace."

"If we can ever find Seymour," replied Sturgis, "I make no doubt we shall be able to locate the lion's share of the money.

"Yes," he added, thoughtfully, "that is all I have been able to discover up to the present time; or, at least, all that seems to be of any immediate importance. Of course, I called on both Mr. Murray and Mr. Scott; but, beyond the fact that Chatham, like Arbogast, was a model employe, all I got from them was the address of Chatham's boarding-house; there I was informed that the accountant had moved on New Year's eve without leaving his new address. There is one other link in the chain of evidence which I have investigated; but I cannot tell yet whether it will lead to anything or not. It may be immaterial; but, who knows? Possibly it may prove to be the key to the entire problem."

"And what is this promising link?" asked Dunlap, eagerly.

"There is not much to tell on this score," answered Sturgis. "You will recall that according to the evidence which we have thus far collected, Chatham was attacked by Arbogast while he was in the act of using the telephone."

"Yes; I remember how minutely you reconstructed that scene."

"Well," continued the reporter, "I saw at once that the telephone might possibly prove to be an important witness for the prosecution, if I could only discover the name of the person with whom Chatham was talking when he was shot. I therefore called at the central office to make inquiries. As I was able to specify almost the exact minute at which this call was sent, it was an easy matter to find the young woman who had answered it; but the chances were that she would not remember the number called for. She did, however, for it had been fixed in her memory by some unusual circumstances. It seems that after giving Chatham the connection he wanted, the operator rang him up. While she was listening for a reply, she heard a sharp report, followed by a scream; then a sound of confused voices, and presently another sharp report. After that came complete silence, and she was unable to obtain any reply to her repeated calls."

"You have here corroborative evidence of the scene between Chatham and Arbogast," said Dunlap.

"Yes; but I did not need that. What I wished to know was the name of the person with whom Chatham wanted to converse."

"Did you discover it?"

"The number of the telephone he gave is that of the Manhattan Chemical company."

"And what is the Manhattan Chemical company?"

"That is the question I asked people connected with the commercial agencies. They replied that they knew very little concerning this firm; because, although it has been in existence for a couple of years, it apparently never asks anyone for credit, preferring to pay cash for all the goods delivered to it. I called at the office of the Manhattan Chemical company to investigate on my own account. The office and store occupy the basement of an old ramshackle building, whose upper stories are rented out as business offices. The laboratory and manufacturing department are downstairs in the cellar. The store contains only a few chairs and a long counter behind which rise shelves containing rows of bottles with brilliantly colored labels. A few painted signs upon the walls vaunt the merits of Dr. Henderson's Cough Cure and Dr. Henderson's Liver Specific. I did not expect to find anyone in on New Year's day. I was, therefore, surprised to see a solitary clerk sitting with his feet upon a desk and apparently absorbed in the reading of a newspaper—a pale young man of the washed-out blond type, with watery green-blue eyes and a scant mustache which fails to conceal a weak mouth. He rose to greet me with an air of surprise which does not speak well for the briskness of trade in the establishment. Indeed, if we are to judge by the aspect of things in the office of the Manhattan Chemical company, business in patent medicines does not appear to be flourishing just at present. By the way, did you ever hear of Dr. Henderson's remedies?"

"No; I cannot say that I have," answered Dunlap.

"That is the curious part of it," said Sturgis. "I have been unable to discover any advertisement published by this firm; and it is only by profuse advertising that such a concern can live."

"Yes, of course," exclaimed Dunlap, somewhat impatiently; "but what has all this to do with Chatham?"

"I don't know," replied Sturgis; "possibly nothing; perhaps a great deal.

"I asked to see Dr. Henderson," he continued, "at which the sleepy clerk stared at me in open-mouthed amazement. Dr. Henderson was not in; it was quite uncertain when he would be in. Indeed, as far as I was able to judge, Dr. Henderson appears to be a rather mysterious personage. No one knows much about him. Even his clerk admits that he has seen him only once or twice in the 18 months during which he has had charge of the office. The doctor attends to the manufacturing part of the business himself; his laboratory, which is down in the cellar, is a most jealously guarded place. No one is ever admitted to it under any pretext. He is evidently afraid that some one may discover the secret of his valuable remedies."

"You say that as if your words were meant to convey some unexpressed meaning," said Dunlap, studying the reporter's face.

"No," Sturgis answered, thoughtfully, "but I am trying to attach some ulterior significance to the facts. There is certainly something mysterious about Dr. Henderson and the Manhattan Chemical company; but whether the mystery is legitimate or not, and if not, whether it is in any way connected with the Arbogast case, is more than I am at present able to determine."

After a short pause he continued:

"When I found that there was no chance of seeing Dr. Henderson himself, I inquired at a venture for the manager. For an instant a puzzled look lent expression to the otherwise vacuous features of the young man. Then a sudden inspiration seemed to come to him. 'Oh! ah! yes,' he exclaimed, 'you mean Mr. Smith.' 'Yes,' said I, catching at a straw. 'Well, but Mr. Smith is not in, either.' I offered to wait for Mr. Smith, and started toward the door of the private office in the rear, because it bore in prominent letters the inscription: 'NO ADMITTANCE.' I had turned the knob before the clerk could stop me; but the door was locked. Mr. Smith, it seems, comes to the office only once a week to receive the clerk's report and to pay him his salary. I tried to make a special appointment to meet Mr. Smith, on the plea of important business. I left a fictitious name and address so that Mr. Smith's answer might be sent to me. That was all I was able to do for the time being; but I thought it worth while to keep an eye open on the Manhattan Chemical company; so I have engaged private detectives to watch it for me night and day until further notice. And there the matter stands."

Dunlap rose wearily from his chair. He looked anxious and careworn.

"Mr. Sturgis," he said, "if you can find any part of that $250,000, a good share of whatever you can recover for the bank is yours."

The reporter flushed and bit his lip; but he answered quietly:

"You mistake me for a detective, Mr. Dunlap; I am only a reporter. I shall be paid by the Tempest for any work I may do on this case. You would better offer your reward to the police."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LETTER.

There is a magic in the refreshing sleep of youth calculated to exorcise the megrims. When Sprague, arising after a good night's rest, found the world bathed in the sunshine of a crisp January day, he felt the physical pleasure of living which comes from supple muscles, from the coursing of a generous blood through the veins, from the cravings of a healthy appetite.

He remembered the "blue devils" of the day before, and found it difficult to account for them. He was in love, certainly. But that in itself did not furnish a sufficient reason for despondency. It was rumored that the object of his affections was on the eve of betrothal to another. But what dependence can be placed upon a public rumor? As a matter of fact Miss Murdock wore no rings; in the absence of the badge of the betrothed woman, was he not justified in believing her fancy free?

In that case there was a fair field and no favor. Why should not he have as good a chance of winning the prize as another man? No man, of course, was worthy of Agnes Murdock. That was the fundamental axiom. But in love success does not perch only upon the banner of the worthy. If it did, the human race would soon become extinct.

So the young man's thoughts ran on, while hope once more found a resting place in his heart.

Miss Murdock was not to pose again, but Sprague was eager to work on the portrait. He was about to step into the studio after breakfast, when the housekeeper announced a call from his lawyer, who wished to consult him about some important matters. The entire morning was thus consumed in necessary but tedious business, and it was not until after luncheon that the artist was at last free to set to work.

Uncovering the portrait, he stood off to examine it. As he did so, something white upon the floor caught his eye. He stooped to pick it up. It was a letter in a beautifully regular masculine hand. Mechanically he turned it over and unfolded it. His eyes carelessly swept the written page; then in a flash he realized what it was, and he flung it violently from him.

Only a few words had left their impress upon his retina—a few scattered words and a signature. But these were branded deep upon his brain for all time, in letters of fire which burned their way to his very soul. For he had recognized the letter which had been delivered by the messenger to Miss Murdock the day before, and he had seen enough to know that it was couched in words of passionate love. In that instant was quenched the last ray of hope which had lurked within his heart. Overwhelmed with a sense of utter desolation, he sank back upon a divan, and for a long time remained lost in bitter reflections.

But Sprague, in spite of his dilettanteism, was a man of grit when occasion called for it. Summoning at length his fortitude and his pride, he proceeded to carry out what he conceived to be the duty of a gentleman under the circumstances.

Picking up the letter again, he placed it unread in an envelope, into which he slipped his card, with a brief explanation of the finding of the paper. Then, after addressing the envelope, he started out to mail it himself.

"Thomas Chatham!" he mused, as he went down the stairs; "Thomas Chatham! Why, he is the man who took such pains to inform me that Miss Murdock was betrothed, or on the point of being betrothed—the flashily dressed young man with red hair who is so regular an attendant at the Murdocks' informal receptions, and who never seems to be invited on state occasions; an insignificant and conceited puppy. Poor girl, what a pity that she should throw herself away upon such a man. But, if he marries her, he shall make her happy, or else—"

The balance of his thought was not put into words; but his face became set in stern lines and his hands clenched in grim determination.

Sprague, with the letter for Miss Murdock in his hand, hurried to the nearest letter box, raised the lid of the drop, inserted the letter in the slot and then tightened his grasp of it and began to think.

The letter, if mailed, might perhaps not reach its destination until the following morning. It might be of importance, since it had been sent by messenger and to the studio instead of to Miss Murdock's house. Besides, Miss Murdock would probably be worried when she discovered that she had lost it. It ought therefore to be returned to her at once.

The letter, by this time, had been withdrawn from the slot of the letter box.

Yes, it ought to be returned by messenger instead of by mail. By messen-

IN A FLASH HE REALIZED WHAT IT WAS.

ger? It was about half a mile to the nearest district messenger office. The Murdocks' house was not much further. Why not deliver the letter himself?

Why not, indeed? The human heart has unfathomable depths. Why should a hopeless lover pine for a mere sight of the woman whose presence only adds to his misery? Explain that who can.

Sprague carefully placed the letter in his breast pocket and started off again, this time directing his steps toward the Murdocks' home.

CHAPTER XV.

TWO LOVERS.

Miss Murdock was seated at the piano in the drawing-room, her shapely fingers wandering dreamily over the keys, when a servant knocked at the door.

"A gintleman to see yer, miss," said the maid.

"A caller!" exclaimed Agnes, in surprise. "At this time of day? Did he give you his card?"

"No, miss. Nor his name, nayther."

"Well, then, Mary," said Agnes, with a mixture of amusement and severity, "why do you announce him? I think you would better keep an eye on the hat-rack."

"He ain't no thafe, miss," said the maid, positively; "he do be dressed up too foine fur that. Besoides, Oi've sane him here before. A hansum young feller wid rid hair—Mister—Mister—Cha—Chapman."

"Chatham!" suggested Agnes, with sudden seriousness.

"Yis, miss; it do be the same."

"I cannot receive him," said Miss Murdock, in frigid tones. "I am surprised that John should have admitted him, after the explicit instructions I gave him yesterday. Hereafter I am never at home to Mr. Chatham."

"Your butler is not at fault in this instance," said a voice from the hallway, and before either of the women could recover from her surprise, a flashily dressed young man with intensely red hair entered the room. He carried his left arm in a sling. His face was pale; his eyes glittered with a feverish light; his voice quivered with repressed excitement.

"I was waiting for your father in his office, when I heard your maid go by, and I asked her to announce me. I hoped for, but I can hardly say I expected, a more hospitable reception."

Miss Murdock, after the first shock of surprise, had drawn up her graceful figure to its full height, and stood looking at the young man with undisguised contempt in her flashing eyes.

Chatham paused as if expecting a reply; and then:

"Shall I explain the object of my visit before your servant?" he asked, bitterly.

"You may leave, Mary, until I ring for you," said the young girl, turning to the maid.

The woman reluctantly left the room, casting curious glances upon her young mistress and her unwelcome guest as she went.

CONTINUED

SHE KNEW ALL ABOUT IT.

And So Will Others When They Read Her Directions for Playing Golf.

"Yes, dear," said the rosy-cheeked girl in the Chevy Chase car to the girl with the white lawn, tucked, six-rowed, open-inserting waist, relates the Washington Star; "yes, brother Jack has told me all about it, and I have read for six months the golf column in all of the papers. I am going out to the links now; come along and look on, it's such fun."

"The more I observe the greater my mystification," rippled the other girl.

"Why, it is simplicity itself, dear," said the golf girl. "Now, listen. I will explain the game in five minutes. Never use any but single-piece drivers and brassys, as they add 20 yards to your drive and never come loose in the glue. The spring is nearer the point of impact and is not deadened by string, while the grain is continuous from top of shaft to toe. If a straight-faced driver entangles with a bulger brassy, the bulger driver will rescue the straight-faced brassy. If the persimmon head comes in the way of the socket of the forked-spliced brassy, rely upon the double length of gluing surface, and call loudly to the caddie for help. The deep-faced, medium mashy will make the convex-back mashy look like a masher in the police court the next morning. If your twisted-neck putting-cleek rubbernecks to see what the deep-faced putting-cleek is doing at the front tee take the niblick and use the mashy-iron to make a long put over the fourth hazard. Some say the goose-necked putting-cleek will knock the contra-jet mashy into a bowl of corn meal mush, but I have found that the lofting-mashy will always bring the gun metal putter to the scratch in one drive—"

"Really, now?"

"Truly. This is important. The jigger concave lofting cleek will make the short-blade cleek look like Sharkey's face in the Ruhlin fight, if you always use the approaching mashy to get over a nine-hole course when there is no hazard to punish a foozled tee shot up a bamboozled ravine, or over an ice pond."

"I will try and remember that."

"Don't fail unless you want the divot to make a putting green feel like 30 cents. If you run across a casual water out of bounds, just make a penalty stroke for a lost ball to retrieve the honor, address the ball, and cry loudly 'one off three,' or 'all even,' or 'three more.' This play will make the other girls jealous. If Col. Bogey says the ball is not played where it lies, he is a liar. If you lead off the tee out of turn, and make a medal play, the men won't mind, as they like the girls to mix the game up; it's such fun to get it straight again, with a match play for disqualification. If the game is going slow, take the caddie bag and whack the cross-bar toward the direction flags. Never press your stokes, as you are apt to conglomerate a bad miss with a fozzle. You will break your club in scalfing, as you will certainly disarrange your hair in topping. Always duck at a low tee; it is as dangerous as a low bridge on a canal. If you place too much gravel under the ball, it will take a lot of sand to finish the game."

"So kind of you, dear, to tell me all this."

"Not at all. I must particularly caution you about keeping your head in the same place until the ball is struck. If you should happen to lay your head on the green while you are making a swing-back, sledge-hammer blow, you might not be able to find it again. Don't be afraid of a preliminary waggle; it won't hurt you, especially if you lay your club down on a bunker. Always play to cut the grass from under the ball; it saves mowing the lawn. If your arms become tired, try a vice versa showing off and lie dead particularly in distance plays. Some players assert that in long puts the arms should be free from the body, but I prefer to keep my arms on."

"What has the green-keeper to do with the turf-divots?"

"Nothing at all. Sometimes the heather and furze plows up a scarifier, but the surface may be cleared if the yawning bunker is not asleep. And never forget that the smartest game of golf can be played from the clubhouse veranda in a stunning new gown. Also remember that the hazards should be left to punish slicing and pulling. A good shot should be rewarded by giving the ball a good lie. It's tired, poor thing. If a bumpy-hole looks careworn, have the caddie run ahead and flag the train. If you think that artificial bunkers and artificial hazards are the same, you are fluking on a single or a foursome."

"So good of you, dear."

"Not at all; good-by; here is the clubhouse. Good-by."

"Good-by."

"Good-by; so sweet of you; good-by."

"Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

Cake Making.

Some one has parodied the old saying and asserted there is no royal road to cake making. There is no short way of accomplishing the same result. If the cake is to be of the best quality the butter must be creamed. It is true it is easier to reduce it to a cream by using a warm bowl to stir it in, but if a hot bowl is used the butter is speedily converted into oil, and ruined for all cake making purposes. The sugar must be stirred into the butter until the two are a uniform cream. The yolks of eggs must then be added to the cream by straining them in, and then slowly the milk or liquid must be added. Finally, the flour, and the baking powder or soda and cream of tartar must be sifted in and the cake firmly and evenly beaten. A plain cake made carefully will be richer and better than a rich cake carelessly made.—N. Y. Tribune.